Imp Anthrop Folklore H.

with the writer's kind regards

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A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF MYTH, TRADITION, INSTITUTION, AND CUSTOM.

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Folk-Lore.

TRANSACTIONS OF THE FOLK-LORE SOCIETY.

VOL. IX.] DECEMBER, 1898. [No. IV.

TUESDAY, JUNE 21st, 1898.

THE PRESIDENT (Mr. Alfred Nutt) in the Chair.

THE Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed.

The election of Miss Corry, Miss E. Hull, and the Cardiff and Salford Public Libraries, as Members of the Society, was announced.

The deaths of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone and Mr. F. C. Birkbeck Terry were also announced.

Mr. Gomme exhibited a Burmese horoscope and some Burmese charms and amulets, sent by Mr. J. B. Andrews, and presented by him to the Society. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Andrews for his gift.

A paper entitled "Theories of the Origin of Religion" was read by Mr. Andrew Lang. A discussion followed, in which Mr. Clodd, Miss Dempster, Mr. Bouverie Pusey, Mr. Gomme, Mr. Brabrook, Miss M. Kingsley, Mr. Crooke, Mr Jacobs, and the President took part.

Papers on "The Star-Lore of the Micmacs of Nova Scotia," by Mr. Stansbury Hagar, and "Sqaktktquaclt or the Benign-faced, the Oannes of the Ntlakapamuq of British Columbia," by Mr. C. Hill-Tout, were also read.

At the conclusion of the meeting a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Lang for his paper.

THE "HIGH GODS" OF AUSTRALIA.

BY EDWIN SIDNEY HARTLAND.

If anyone, accustomed to Mr. Lang's usual half-serious, half-satiric vein, have come to doubt that he can ever be in earnest (save when attacking Professor Max Müller), *The Making of Religion* (Longmans, 1898) is calculated to undeceive him. It is a counterblast in deadly earnest to current anthropological theories, or what he describes as such; and it winds up with (for him) an impassioned appeal on behalf of the rudiments of theological orthodoxy. He thus states the current anthropological theories which he attacks:

"Man derived the conception of 'spirit' or 'soul' from his reflections on the phenomena of sleep, dreams, death, shadow, and from the experience of trance and hallucination. Worshipping first the departed souls of his kindred, man later extended the doctrine of spiritual beings in many directions. Ghosts or other spiritual existences fashioned on the same lines prospered till they became gods. Finally, as the result of a variety of processes, one of these gods became supreme, and, at last, was regarded as the only God. Meanwhile man retained his belief in the existence of his own soul surviving after the death of the body, and so reached the conception of immortality. Thus the ideas of God and of the soul are the result of early fallacious reasonings about misunderstood experiences."

He combats the theories thus stated, first, by enlarging on the hallucinations, the trances, the "visions" of savages, comparing them with modern civilised spiritualistic and other phenomena, insisting on the reality of the experiences, and suggesting that, forming as they do the foundation, "at least in part," of the savage theory of the soul, they "cannot

at present be made to fit into any purely materialistic conception of the universe:" meaning, I presume, that the savage theory of the soul is, substantially and in its main outlines, a correct interpretation of facts.

Now, whether this be so or not, is not a question within the domain of the science of folklore. As students of folklore we must be content to leave the inquiry to scientific psychologists. The facts, at all events as regards the savage phenomena, have by no means been overlooked. The only debate here is on the relative importance to be attached to them as part of the foundation of the savage theory of the soul. It is well that attention should be called to them in an emphatic way, for one of the dangers attending an inquiry into a subject as complex as that of savage philosophy and religion is that of unduly neglecting one or more series of phenomena in favour of another or of others. To this extent, therefore, Mr. Lang has rendered a service to anthropology for which we must be grateful.

Incidentally also he brings into prominence unsolved questions, like that of the reason for tying up a seer, which may have an unsuspected value for the determination of larger issues. The author conjectures that the seer was tied up because corpses were tied up, so as to put him "on a level with the dead, who will then communicate with him." The range of the two customs, however, does not appear to be identical; and it may turn out, though Mr. Lang does not suggest it, that the seer was not tied up to introduce him to the society of the dead, but that the dead and the seer were alike tied up for a common reason. If so, that reason remains to be discovered. We think we know why the dead were bound, but we may not, after all, have got to the bottom of the mystery. Now that the resemblance between the binding of the dead and the binding of the seer, and the apparent connection between them, have been pointed out, students may be led to further and, let us hope, successful research.

But as matter of anthropological controversy Mr. Lang's second ground of quarrel with current theories is far the more important, for here he directly traverses the scheme as set forth in his opening paragraph. He boldly alleges not merely that gods were not developed out of "ghosts or other spiritual existences fashioned on the same lines," but that the conception of a "relatively Supreme Being" was reached by "men in very rudimentary social conditions," and that "the idea of God in its earliest known shape" had nothing to do with that of spirit. The opinions against which the polemic is here directed are chiefly those of Professor Tylor and Mr. Herbert Spencer. But there are many anthropologists who, while admitting that at a certain level of civilisation the worship of the spirits of the dead has shot up and overshadowed all other forms of religion, yet utterly decline to see in that worship the beginning of religion. They hold that, in spite of the darkness which enshrouds the primitive past of mankind, it is possible to obtain glimpses of an earlier time when man had not attained to the conception of a disembodied spirit, when, conscious himself of will and sensation and reason, he endowed everything round him with those qualities. They do not believe that the idea of God has arisen from that of a ghost or disembodied spirit of a dead man. They agree with Mr. Lang that the evidence will not warrant such a conclusion. With much of this argument, therefore, they have no quarrel. Where they differ from him is in his assertion of a moral, relatively Supreme Being, a Creator, as known to "men in very rudimentary social conditions."

It may be worth while to spend a little time, for the sake of the importance of the subject, and of the undoubted weight of Mr. Lang's authority as an anthropologist, in considering his evidence on this point. In the following pages I propose to deal in detail with so much as relates to the Australian race, leaving the rest for some future opportunity.

It is, first of all, desirable to be clear what it is he asserts. It is, as I understand, that one of the two chief sources of religion (the other being a belief in the soul, with which we have nothing to do here) was "the belief, how attained we know not, in a powerful, moral, eternal, omniscient Father and Judge of men." "From the most backward races historically known to us," we are told, "to those of our own status, all have been more or less washed by the waters of this double stream of religion." Elsewhere he speaks of a "Supreme Being," or a "relatively Supreme Being," of "the equal Father of all men," of "a universal Father and Maker," "a moral Creator," and so forth, as the earliest conception of God, or of a god known to us; or at least we are told that He "may be"—by which Mr. Lang desires to intimate his opinion that He was—"(though he cannot *historically* be shown to be) prior to the first notion of ghost and separable souls." The italics are mine.

Now, although in the passage quoted above the author professes ignorance how this conception was attained, he adds in a note: "the hypothesis of St. Paul seems not the most unsatisfactory." This hypothesis is that the belief in question arose out of the "Argument from Design" (p. 200). He holds, therefore, that "the most backward races historically known to us" had by reasoning arrived at the belief in a moral, eternal, omniscient Creator and Judge. The description applies particularly to the Australian aborigines, who seem to have been unconscious English Deists in paint and scars and feathers. On the antecedent improbability that naked savages, without any organised system of government, and incapable of counting up to seven, could have attained a philosophical conception so lofty, there is no need to argue. It is obvious that the theory demands cogent proof.

Mr. Lang begins by referring to the Fuegians and Patagonians, about whom our information is so extremely fragmentary that I will waste no words upon it. He then

passes to the Australians, who, he rightly says, "of all races now extant . . . . are probably lowest in culture, and . . . . nearest to the primitive model. They have neither metals, bows, pottery, agriculture, nor fixed habitations; and no traces of higher culture have anywhere been found above or in the soil of the continent" (p. 189). "Their best religious ideas," we learn, "are imparted in their ancient and secret mysteries," which, let me add, are celebrated with horrible cruelty and worse than beastly filthiness.[1] Before examining the teaching given to the initiate in the mysteries, Mr. Lang quotes and discusses Mr. Howitt's account of the "Supreme Spirit" of various tribes. The Murring tribes give the name of Daramulun (with certain dialectal variations) to a being who "taught the Murring all the arts they knew: he instituted the ceremonies of Initiation of Youths; he made the original Mudji (or bull-roarer), ordered the animal names to be assumed by men, and directed what rules should be observed as to the food permitted or forbidden to certain persons."

Without mixing up Daramulun with the "Supreme Spirit" of other tribes, let us first see what we know of him alone as the conception formed by the Murring of the moral, eternal, omniscient Creator and Judge. "He was not, it seems to me," writes Mr. Howitt, "everywhere thought to be a malevolent being, but he was dreaded as one who could severely punish the trespasses against those tribal ordinances and customs whose first institution is ascribed to him." He "watched the youths from the sky, prompt to punish, by sickness or death, the breach of his ordinances."[2] Upon these passages Mr. Lang remarks that "to punish transgressions of his law is not the essence

[1] Mr. Lang admits that some of them "are neither moral nor theistic" (p. 195), and, again, that some of the ceremonies are "cruel and farcical" (p. 192). This is to put it mildly.

[2] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiii., p. 192. These passages are quoted by Mr. Lang.

of a malevolent being" (p. 193). We should rather say that the first inference to be drawn is that Daramulun is regarded as a special tribal patron. The Murring could not be ignorant that other tribes had their own mysteries. Whether they identified Daramulun with the Being who was celebrated in the latter we know not. Probably they never thought about it. At any rate it is clear that Daramulun holds a peculiar relation to the tribes which believe in him. His name is only communicated at initiation. It is unknown to women and children. Among the Ngarego and Wolgal (two of the Murring tribes) the women only know vaguely of a great being beyond the sky, whom they call Papang (father). The name of Daramulun is avoided by the men or spoken almost in whispers, except during the ceremonies, when it is uttered as the accompaniment of a dance.[1] This apparent sacredness, be it observed, is founded on the universal superstition that a name is part and parcel of its owner, and to utter it is to summon the owner, however distant he may be. Obviously, to do so when the owner is a god and is not wanted, is to expose oneself to his vengeance for making a fool of him. It is a common, if not universal, custom for an Australian savage to have a secret name known only to members of his clan, or at least of his (territorial) tribe, and rarely or never uttered.[2] The name of Daramulun is a secret only known to the Murring tribes and their congeners. It is said to mean "leg-on-one-side," or "lame,"[3] probably from a personal peculiarity, like Tsuni‖goam among the Hottentots.

Daramulun having "in the beginning," a phrase to which we must give a very wide interpretation, "instituted these ceremonies, and constituted the aboriginal society as it exists" among these tribes, died; this eternal Creator with

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., pp. 193, 452. The Theddora women, it seems, were not kept in ignorance of the name, though they knew little more about him.

[2] See for example Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, p. 191.

[3] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xxi., p. 294.

a game-leg "died, and his spirit (Būlabong) went up to the sky, where he has since lived with the ghosts."[1] The statement is unaccountably overlooked by Mr. Lang, who indeed asserts the contrary (p. 194, note), and insists that "the essential idea of Daramulun and Baiame, and most of the high gods of Australia and of other low races, is that they never died at all" (p. 205). When a god dies, he is "a confessed ghost-god" (p. 205). Daramulun, therefore, is "a confessed ghost-god."

Perhaps Mr. Lang will tell us that this legend of Daramulun's death is a part of the folklore, of the mythology, and not of the religious belief of the Murring tribes. That lies upon him to show: Mr. Howitt is silent on the point. "The mythology of the god is a kind of joke with no sacredness about it," says Mr. Lang (p. 197). No doubt this is a very convenient way of treating awkward statements. On the previous page, however, he has been dealing with myths in all seriousness, setting against one which "*may* be interpreted as ancestor-worship," others which *may* be (and are by him) interpreted of creation; and apparently he is satisfied with the overwhelming number of these myths of creation. "The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning." If the mythology of the god be a kind of joke, then the "myth of making or creating" has "no sacredness about it," and is of no more value as an expression of the real belief of the "Narrinyeri, Boonorong, the Wolgal, Ngarego, Theddora, Coast Murring, and Wiraijuri, worshippers of Daramulun," than the myth told by the Kurnai of their "grandfather, not maker," Mungan-ngaur.

But what is the distinction between religious belief and myth? Where does the one begin and the other end? Myths are told in the mysteries as well as outside them. They are part of the rite, part of the religious belief.

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., pp. 194, 446.

Men reasoned about things in a more or less disjointed fashion, and their reasonings took the shape of tales. The theories of savages regarding the origin of things are always expressed as narrative, nor do they trouble to render them consistent. The real origin of the contradictions in these narratives, even when told by the same people about the same persons and events, is not so much that some are esteemed sacred and others secular. There is no such division, or, if there be, Mr. Howitt and Mr. Matthews, who are Mr. Lang's authorities, do not know it, for they quote indiscriminately as *beliefs* stories told in the mysteries and stories told outside them; and they ought to know. The reason lies in the vagueness of the savage mind and the shifting nature of tradition.

We may illustrate this statement by a few other facts recorded (but not by Mr. Lang) about this moral, eternal, omniscient Creator and Judge. The Wiraijuri (one of the Murring tribes) hold explicitly that Daramulun is not the supreme master, but the son of Baiame, whom we shall discuss presently. Indeed, according to some versions, there are several Daramuluns, all of them sons of Baiame. This tribe holds, too, that Daramulun lives not in heaven, but in the earth. A wizard related to Mr. Howitt how he had been taken down by his totem, a tiger-snake, into the ground beneath a great tree, and up under the tree, which was hollow; and there he saw, not Daramulun, but "a number of little Daramuluns." It does not appear whether these were the offspring of Daramulun. In any case Daramulun has a wife, or two wives, for her name, Ngalalbal, is a dual form, and here again tradition seems to vary. Ngalalbal is or are invoked, equally with Daramulun, in the mysteries. She is the emu and "woman;" and hence emu-flesh is forbidden to novices, who are not allowed "so much as to look at a woman or to speak to one." The Wiraijuri also call the emu "the food of Baiame," and forbid its flesh on this account to novices. The emu seems

also to be the food of Daramulun; for in the mysteries they exhibit the moulded figure of his "tomahawk, which he threw after the emu as he was descending by the path," represented by a strip of bark, "from the sky to the earth." They also show two of the emu's footprints as it was endeavouring to escape, and its figure where it fell. Moreover, the Wiraijuri are divided into exogamous classes and sub-classes. One of these is called Yibai (Iguana); and Yibai, we are told, is a synonym of Daramulun.[1] This may be regarded as some, though slight, evidence that Daramulun is the father, or one of the fathers, of the tribe; if there be any evidence that he was the creator I have overlooked it.

The Wiradthuri, described by Mr. Matthews, appear to be the same people as the Wiraijuri of Mr. Howitt,[2] or at all events a branch of them. Here we get a further variant of the traditions relating to Daramulun, which was told to Mr. Matthews by an old wizard, and is given as intimately connected with the ceremonies of initiation. There would seem, therefore, no doubt as to its religious character. In this legend Daramulun is pictured as "a gigantic and powerful being, something between a blackfellow and a spirit." He was "one of Baiamai's people," and his voice "resembled the rumbling of distant thunder." To him the boys of the tribe were handed over, to be taken into the bush and instructed in "the laws, traditions, and customs of the community," and in short to fit them for adult life. Daramulun pretended to Baiame that his method of procedure was to kill the boys, cut them up, burn them

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiii., pp. 452, 450, 456; vol. xvi., pp. 49, 50. The small iguana and the young emu, it should also be noted, are totems among the Wiraijuri, but whether they are identified with Yibai and Ngalal, the iguana and the emu, does not appear. *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 437.

[2] Compare Mr. Howitt's account, *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xxv., p. 433, with Mr. Matthews's, *ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 295. The sound represented by *j* or *dj* is sometimes at all events represented by *dth*. See also *ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 345.

to ashes, and then to form the ashes into human shape and restore them to life, each with a tooth missing, the visible sign of his initiation. Or, as the story is told "in some tribes," he swallowed them and vomited them up again, possessing all the tribal knowledge, but each of them minus a tooth. Some, however, of the boys were, time after time, never returned to the camp. Baiame at length grew uneasy about them; and by dint of questioning the young men, and compelling them, in spite of their fears of Daramulun, to speak the truth, he learnt that Daramulun's account of the process of initiation was entirely untrue, that he did not swallow or kill all the boys, but that he wrenched out the missing tooth with his own, and sometimes varied the performance by biting off the boy's entire face and devouring him. A boy so treated, of course, did not return. Baiame in his rage destroyed the moral, eternal, omniscient Creator and Judge, Daramulun, and, putting his voice into all the trees of the forest, decreed that it should remain in them for ever. He furthermore instituted the Būrbŭng, as the mysteries of the Wiradthuri are called, and made the first bull-roarer, but directed that the women and uninitiated were not to be told of Daramulun's fraud; they were to be left under the impression that the boys were actually put to death and restored to life by Daramulun. It is added that this fraudulent moral being "had a wife named Moonibear, who watched over all matters relating to the women of the tribes"; and a small bull-roarer bearing her name was also used in the ceremonies.[1]

All these particulars have been judiciously omitted by Mr. Lang, though there is no evidence that they are a whit less sacred, or looked upon as a whit less true, than any he has given us; and the scientific inquirer must take them into account, and in their light interpret whatever else is told us about the Great Master, Daramulun. But we have still to

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 297. See also vol. xiv., p. 358.

see what can be learnt of Baiame, Bunjil, and Mungan-ngaur, other alleged Supreme Beings of the Australians.

Concerning Baiame Mr. Lang tells us that, in common with Daramulun "and most of the High Gods of Australia and of other low races," he "never died at all." Speaking generally, "they belong to the period before death came into the world," they are "magnified non-natural men, or undefined beings who were from the beginning and are eternal." "Not being ghosts they crave no food from men, and receive no sacrifice," but they are adored "by ethical conformity to their will and by solemn ceremony." They are "creators, moral guides, rewarders and punishers of conduct" (pp. 205, 207, 208). And it is specifically denied that Baiame is a deified blackfellow (p. 195).

I do not wonder that Mr. Lang shirks all details about Baiame. The legend I have just summarised is a solemn tradition connected with the ritual on which he lays so much stress; and there Baiame appears as the head of a clan or community, "Baiame's people:" in fact, the headman of a tribe. Nor is this all. Baiame has a wife named Gunnanbuly and two sons. With these sons he went out hunting one day, caught two kangaroos, and cut their tails off. At the next Bora (mysteries) to which they went, the two sons "danced with these tails tied behind them like kangaroos, and this custom has been followed by the tribes at all Boras ever since."[1] Here, then, Baiame does not establish the mysteries, they are already practised. Not only does he hunt kangaroo, he hunts emu also. In native fashion, this Creator skulks in a tree near a water-hole, waiting for the bird to come and drink. He had a bad fall one day while running after an emu he had speared in this way, for he tripped over a log and fell flat on his face. The incident is represented in the mysteries; and the figure, made in earth, of the Supreme

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., pp. 416, 417, 423; vol. xxv., pp. 299, 301.

Being, Baiame, is shown to the neophytes in this ridiculous attitude, with a print in the clay beside him left by the hand that he vainly spread out to save himself as he tumbled headlong.[1] But he had better luck sometimes, for the emu is his food.[2]

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the foregoing merry adventures of the Baiame family, neglected by Mr. Lang, are not "a kind of joke with no sacredness about it." They are inseparably bound up with the innermost sanctities of religion, and communicated to the adolescent Kamilaroi at the most solemn moment of their lives. When, therefore, we are told that Baiame is their creator, we must ask in what sense the word is used. Unfortunately we have no details of the creative act. But we know that the idea of creation, as we use it, is completely foreign to savage ideas. The sublime conception of the creative fiat as set forth in the book of Genesis, and interpreted by Christian dogma, is the product of ages of civilisation; and to use the word *creation* is to import into the deeds of an imaginary being, who is presented, if not as "a deified blackfellow," at least as hardly more than a very exalted savage wizard, ideas which do not belong to them, and therefore are utterly misleading to the reader. The Rev. W. Ridley, indeed, states that, among certain aborigines on the Namoi, Barwan, and other tributaries of the Darling, "the blacks who are acquainted with English," and have therefore presumably come into contact with English ideas, say that "He made earth and water and sky, animals and men; that He makes the rain come down and the grass grow; that He has delivered their fathers from evil demons; that He welcomes good people to the great 'Warrambool' (watercourse and grove) in the sky—the Milky Way—a paradise of peace and plenty; and that He destroys the bad." And his name is said to be

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., pp. 300, 311.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 456.

derived from *baia*, to make, cut out, or build.[1] But this account must surely be received with very great caution. There is evidence—negative evidence, it is true, but of persons in a position to be well informed—that Baiame, if known at all by that name, was not so prominent a figure in the beliefs of the natives until about sixty years ago, and that, at all events, what Dr. Tylor justly calls the "markedly biblical characteristics" observable in Mr. Ridley's report have appeared only since the advent of the missionaries and the extended converse of the aborigines with white settlers. Dr. Tylor, whose discussion of the question Mr. Lang does not mention, sums it up in these words: "The evidence points rather, in my opinion, to Baiame being the missionary translation of the word Creator, used in Scripture lesson-books for God."[2] Mr. Lang may challenge this opinion as that of an anthropologist, however distinguished, whose theories a large part of his book is occupied with controverting. And probably it is not altogether beyond dispute. The facts, however, remain that the earliest mention of Baiame is in the year 1840, that he is then said to be living on an island in the sea and to feed on fish, that while some natives considered him "Creator," others were said to attribute that office to his son Burambin, that his biblical characteristics, as reported by missionaries, constantly expanded down to the publication of Mr. Brough Smyth's work in 1878, and that in the most recent accounts—those of Mr. Matthews, who is not a missionary—they have so far disappeared that he is now only said to have created the tribesmen themselves. It seems reasonable on the whole to infer that, whatever may be the origin of his name and his earlier position in native thought, the points of his story most resembling the Christian conception of Creator have been unconsciously evolved, first by white explorers, then by missionaries, and lastly by the natives themselves under

[1] Brough Smyth, vol. ii., p. 285.

[2] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xxi., p. 294.

European influence.[1] That European influence has penetrated even into the mysteries we find indisputably from the fact that among the sacred figures prepared for the ceremonies by the Kamilaroi is that of a bullock, an animal unknown before the advent of the whites.[2]

Having regard to Baiame's family life, we may suspect that among the Kamilaroi, the title of "Father" is to be taken in a much more literal sense than we do with reference to God. Mr. Matthews does not report them as declaring that he created "the country and all that is in it for their use;" only that he gave it them, after which he and Gunnanbeely went away. In what manner the departure took place we are not told; but we may guess, from the examples of Daramulun and Bunjil, that it was not quite voluntary. Unless I have overlooked the passage, it does not seem that Baiame is worshipped by the Kamilaroi, even by the utterance of his name, although they sing a song called "Baiame's Song," the words of which Mr. Matthews promises to give at a future time. How far the principles of conduct laid down for the benefit of the neophytes at the Bora may be properly described as "ethical conformity to his will" we will consider hereafter. Whether they are sanctioned by threats of divine inter-

[1] It is not wholly without significance in this connection that in the legends of the Noongahburrahs, a tribe on the Narran River in New South Wales, Baiame is regarded simply as a great wizard or doctor (Wirreenun), the "mightiest and most famous of the Wirreenun." We are told that "alone in a thick scrub, on one of the Noondoo ridges, lives this old man, Byamee, the mightiest of Wirreenun." He had two wives, Birrahgnooloo and Cunnunbeillee. They were once swallowed by two alligators, but rescued and brought back to life by their husband. He retired to his present abode after certain strange events at a great Bora. (Mrs. Parker, *Australian Legendary Tales*, pp. 11, 94.) No doubt this is "folklore," and not part and parcel of the mysteries. Perhaps, therefore, Mr. Lang will seek to put it out of court, as "a kind of joke with no sacredness about it." But the odd thing is that it treats Baiame with more seriousness and respect than much of the solemn instruction of the mysteries.

[2] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xxiv., p. 416.

position does not appear. The instruction is certainly given in a peculiar manner, and is mixed up with much that cannot be fairly called ethical.[1]

Among the Wiraijuri, Baiame is said to have his camp above the clouds, where he is visited by the medicine-men. They ascend astride a thread, and enter at a place which keeps "opening and shutting very quickly," like the Clashing Rocks of the Argonautic Expedition and many other mythical doors, "On the other side," says an eye-witness, "we saw Baiame sitting in his camp. He was a very great old man with a long beard. He sate with his legs under him [squatting in native fashion], and from his shoulders extended two great quartz crystals to the sky above him. There were also numbers of the boys of Baiame and of his people, who are birds and beasts."[2] It is in some such way that the Wiraijuri wizard receives his power; and the gift of this power in dreams is almost all the earthly labour now undertaken by Baiame. But evidently in his own camp he still carries on his family life, begetting boys and ruling his people, who are celestial birds and beasts. As a moral being, all we know of him is that he slew Daramulun, not for his fraud and cruelty, but because he himself lost through him so many of his young men; that he instituted the Burbung, including, of course, the moral lessons we have yet to deal with; and that he commanded the men to continue to make "the women and uninitiated" believe the fable that Daramulun actually burnt and restored to life the boys who were taken away for initiation.[3] Omniscient he certainly is not; for Daramulun deceived him, nor did he learn the truth until in an entirely human way he had got it out of the mouths of eye-witnesses.

Turning now to Bunjil, or Pundjel, the "Supreme Being" of the Kulin tribes, it is satisfactory to find that he has a

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 416, 423, 424, 426; vol. xxv., pp. 311, 334, 337.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., pp. 49, 50, 54.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., pp. 297, 298.

somewhat better character than Baiame; for, says Mr. Howitt, he "seems to have been regarded much in the light in which William Beiruk described to me the Ngŭrŭngæta, or headman of his tribe, "a man who did no one any harm, and who spoke straight."[1] In common with Baiame and Daramulun he is called "Father;"[2] and, as in the case of Daramulun, there is a disinclination to utter his name "when speaking of his supernatural powers," though not so much when repeating the "folklore" in which he plays a part.[3] This, as I have already explained, seems to arise less from the sacredness of the name than from a fear that the speaker may be taken to be summoning Bunjil to display his remarkable powers, a display that would often be highly inconvenient, not to say dangerous.

The word Bunjil is known and used over a considerable area of the south-eastern part of the Australian continent. Among many tribes of Victoria it means Eaglehawk, and is not only the name of their "Great Spirit," but also of one of their two primary class-divisions,[4] just as among the Murring tribes Yibai, or Iguana, the name of their class-divisions, is a synonym of Daramulun. In both cases it probably indicates ancestral relation to the tribe. This is confirmed by the fact that six of the totems of the Woiworung, one of the Kulin tribes, which are various animals and birds, are called "sons of Bunjil." For Bunjil, like Daramulun, is married and has two wives. At a certain period in his history he "left the earth with all his people, and went aloft in a furious wind, which tore the trees up by the roots." It must not, however, be thought that this was an exhibition of the "Supreme

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 192.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 313.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 193.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 454; Fison and Howitt, p. 210. It is curious that one of Baiame's feats is the chasing away of an eagle-hawk whose nest was near his "first home." *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xxiv., p. 417.

Being's" power, but of his weakness. For the jay, "who at that time was a man, had a great many bags full of wind, and being angry, he one day opened the bags, and made such a great wind that Bund-jel and nearly all his family were carried up into the heavens." He is now the star Fomalhaut, and his wives and six sons are established as eight other stars.[1]

Among the Kurnai, Bunjil is a common title of respect, which Mr. Howitt states may be freely rendered "Elder." In later life the Kurnai man usually receives a name from a personal peculiarity or incident, and Bunjil is part of this name. Thus Mr. Howitt himself was called Bunjil Gŭyŭrgŭn, or Elder Rapids, from his exploit in floating down a dangerous river, through a narrow pass which had never been explored.[2] A man with a deep growling voice was called Bunjil Gworŭn, or Elder Thunder. All the wizards are called Bunjil; the rain-makers are called Bunjil Willŭng; those whose business it is to aid in elopements are called Bunjil Yenjin; the wizards who cause death "by a combination of sorcery and violence" are called Bunjil Barn. Of the latter Mr. Howitt writes: "Their magic fire round which they dance, singing the name of their intended victim, is exactly the magic fire of the Murring initiation ceremonies, and the Bunjil Barn, being rubbed over with charcoal, followed the custom of the initiation."[3] Accordingly, it is not surprising to find that, in spite of Bunjil's good character, he was regarded as the source of "these fatal magical powers," as are also Brewin and Daramulun.[4]

I do not find that Bunjil is regarded as judge; though no doubt his position as a star gives him facilities of observa-

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., pp. 452, 193, 194; Brough Smyth, vol. i., p. 427. The same page contains a different account, another illustration of the vague and fluid character of tradition.

[2] Fison and Howitt, pp. 210, 211.

[3] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xvi., pp. 33, 34, 35; Fison and Howitt, p. 252.

[4] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 194.

tion, and the vague threat "he can see you and all you do down here" implies a fear of vengeance in case of offending him. There is no account, so far as I have read, of his connection, if any, with the mysteries, nor of anything in the shape of worship, even as much as the ritual utterance of his name. Of his "precepts," referred to by Mr. Lang (p. 315), I know nothing. Grotesque stories are told of Bunjil as "Creator," and of his marital relations and his brother Pal-ly-yan, or Boo-err-go-en (if these two are the same). I give one of these stories on a later page. According to another, though Bunjil had made men, it was left to Pal-ly-yan to make women, or rather to fish them out of a water-hole. The legends need not detain us; they are of the usual savage character.[1]

But the great name by which Mr. Lang conjures is Mūngan-ngaur,[2] Our Father, revealed in the secret rites of the Kurnai, "a Being not defined as spirit, but immortal, and dwelling in heaven" (p. 196). Let me pause for a moment to observe that he lays great emphasis on the distinction between spirits and these alleged Supreme Beings. And he is right, if by spirit he mean *human spirit*, the ghost or *manes* of a dead man. There is nothing to show that many heathen gods were regarded as the ghosts of once living men; and there is much to show the contrary. But if he mean *spirit* in the more general sense, then we must demur. The idea of immateriality, which we attach to *spirit*, is foreign to the savage mind. Even ghosts of the dead are not regarded as wholly immaterial. They are beings less substantial perhaps (though not always) than living men, with greater power of changing their form, and of locomotion, appearing and disappearing in a marvellous way, but not of a kind quite disparate from matter. They suffer from cold and from hunger, unless their surviving

[1] Brough Smyth, vol. i., pp. 423, *seqq*.

[2] I do not know what authority Mr. Lang has for writing Mungun-ngaur. I have followed Mr. Howitt's spelling.

relatives supply them with clothing and food; they may even die. Different animals in various parts of the world are regarded as spirits of the dead. A serpent is a common form in Africa, and was well known to the classical Greeks and Romans. About Lake Nyassa, "a great hunter generally takes the form of a lion or a leopard; and all witches seem to like the form of a hyena."[1] The dead man has in fact only undergone transformation, though there is a difference of opinion as to whether there is an end of him if the animal manifestation be slain. What is true of African belief is true of all savage belief. The entirely immaterial soul is a product of civilised philosophy. This being so, it is not surprising that gods who are not ghosts of the dead are not regarded as immaterial. The truth is, as Mr. Lang points out, that "the question of spirit or not spirit [in our sense of the word, be it understood] was not raised at all" (p. 182). But it was not raised, because our sense of the word *spirit* had never entered the heads of the savages. They implicitly assumed material qualities for all their supernatural beings, whether ghosts, or gods, or devils. The tissue may have been finer, the powers greater, but they were of one substance with themselves.

Accordingly this undefined Being, Mungan-ngaur, was sufficiently material, sufficiently carnal, to have a son, Tundun, "who was married and who is the direct ancestor—the Weintwin, or father's father—of the Kurnai."[2] Mr. Howitt tells us nothing about Mungan-ngaur's wife, but this may be because his information was imperfect; so far as the evidence goes there is no reason to suppose that his son was believed to have come into existence in other than the natural way. Tundun's wife is expressly mentioned

[1] Macdonald, *Africana*, vol. i., p. 63. What spirit (Lisoka) or pure spirit (Lisokape) may be in the metaphysics of the Blantyre tribes Mr. Macdonald does not define.

[2] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiv., p. 313.

because she plays a part in the mysteries. Two bull-roarers are used, a large one and a small one, bearing the respective names of Tundun, "the man," and Rukut Tundun, the woman, or wife of Tundun. The former is also called grandfather, or Mŭkbrōgan, Arch-comrade.[1] At any rate Mungan-ngaur is father, not creator, for no myth of creation is mentioned. He is the culture-god who taught the Kurnai all the arts they know and gave them the names —the personal names apparently—they bear.[2] The giving of a name is the function of the paternal grandfather or grandmother.[3] Hence it is appropriately assigned to a being who is regarded as ancestor. Moreover, he instituted the Jeraeil or mysteries, and, says Mr. Lang with a covert reference to the Hebrew Deluge, "destroyed the earth by water when they were impiously revealed" (p. 196). But the similarity to the story in Genesis is not really so great. Mungan-ngaur lived at that time upon the earth. When the secrets were revealed to women, he became angry and "sent fire, which filled the whole space between earth and sky. Men went mad with fear and speared one another. . . . . Then the sea rushed over the land and nearly all mankind were drowned. Those who survived became the ancestors of the Kurnai. Some of them turned into animals, birds, reptiles, and fishes; and Tundun and his wife," who we are not told were guilty, "became porpoises." The transformed people are called Muk-Kurnai, Arch-Kurnai, Eminent Men. Mungan then "left the earth and ascended to the sky, where he still

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 312. The word Brogan means more than *comrade:* it amounts to *brother*. All who have been initiated at the same time are Brogan, and address each other's wives as *wife*, and each other's children as *child*. The wife of Mr. Howitt's Brogan addressed Mr. Howitt as "my husband," and he returned the compliment to her. (Fison and Howitt, 198.) Tundun seems also to be the name for a chest affection, caused by Brewin, of whom more anon. Brough Smyth, vol. i., p. 472.

[2] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiv., p. 313.

[3] Fison and Howitt, p. 190.

remains."[1] "The attributes and powers of Mungan-ngaur," says Mr. Howitt elsewhere, "are precisely those of Daramulun and of Baiame, who are also called 'our Father' by the tribes believing in them." These attributes "are those of unbounded power, including of course a most potent magic, which is imparted by them to the wizards; the power of doing anything and going anywhere and of seeing all that is done by the tribesmen. Correlated with these is the power and the will to punish for breaches of the tribal laws. In all these instances the Great Father of the tribe, who was once on earth, and now lives in the sky, is rather the beneficent father, and the kindly, though severe, headman of the whole tribe—of men on earth and of ghosts [*sc.* of deceased tribesmen] in the sky—than the malevolent wizard, such as are other of the supernatural beings believed in by Australian Blacks."[2]

This is all we are told of Mungan-ngaur. Scanty as the record is, therein lies its virtue. For facts, as we have already seen, are disposed to be so bigoted, that at length we may congratulate Mr. Lang on the discovery of a name that yields a little toleration and scope to his imagination. Let us pray him, however, to moderate its flight, remembering that more may be learned hereafter which may prove as awkward for his theory as some of the other facts of Australian belief. The analogy of the gods we have previously examined may well lead us to suspect that Mungan-ngaur is not quite unknown outside the mysteries. His peculiarity is that he had no other name than Our Father. But the Kurnai have another Supreme Being—if indeed he be not the same—who is called Brewin. He, too, is in effect the headman of the tribe; but "with the attributes of malevolent magic powers." He, too, lives in the sky, though how he got thither Mr. Howitt did not learn. Like Baiame, he is married, and it is freely told how his wife

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiv., p. 313.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 321.

and son, being foiled by the crow and the swamp-hawk in stealing the fire of the Kurnai, climbed up to the sky by a thread made of the tail-sinews of the red wallaby. There was no restriction against the women's knowing about him. Mr. Howitt significantly connects this with their participation in the ceremonies of initiation, which is greater than among some tribes. The only part they do not seem to know is that in which the bull-roarer is revealed, and the name and legend of Mungan-ngaur are taught. In common with other wizards he sends disease. He travels in a whirlwind, as do European fairies; and, like the "Supreme Beings" of other Australian tribes, he gives fatal magical powers. In fact, it looks as though he were identical with Mungan-ngaur; only outside the more secret parts of the Jeraeil his more forbidding aspect is dwelt on, and his fatherhood of the tribe concealed, or kept in the background. No woman, we are told, would ever call him "Father," "for he was dreaded as being very malignant." So far as appears, neither his name nor that of Mungan-ngaur is invoked in the mysteries, but the names of the Yeerung (emu-wren), or Men's Brother, and the Djeetgun (superb warbler), or Gins' Sister—what have been called, for want of better words, the male and female totems—are among the exclamations used on these occasions.[1] To conclude, malignant as he is, himself, his wife and son "are at the most but dim and indistinct figures."[2] It is true, this last is an early statement by Mr. Howitt; but his latest statements hardly add to or modify it. And the same might be said of Mungan-ngaur.

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., pp. 191, 194; vol. xvi., pp. 40, 42, 56; vol. xiv., p. 309. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. i., p. 64, quoting a communication of Mr. Howitt.

[2] Fison and Howitt, p. 254. The Kurnai speak of two other beings, yet more dim and indistinct: Būllūm-dūt, and Baukan or Būllūm-baukan. *Bullum* means *two*. See *ibid.*, and Brough Smyth, vol. i., p. 471, from information supplied by Mr. Howitt.

We have now gone over what Mr. Howitt and Mr. Matthews tell us of Daramulun, Bunjil, Baiame, and Mungan-ngaur, supplementing the accounts of Bunjil and Baiame from Mr. Brough Smyth. We have not found these Supreme Beings eternal. Of Daramulun, it is expressly asserted that he died; he is "a confessed ghost-god." Bunjil, whatever he was once (perhaps an eaglehawk), is now a star. Baiame "went away" (or was puffed away by the jay), and now has his camp above the clouds. Mungan-ngaur, who used to live on the earth, "ascended to the sky, where he still remains." In no case was heaven, or the sky, the god's first home. Hence it is the reverse of correct to say that "they were, naturally, from the beginning, from before the coming in of death, immortal Fathers in Heaven" (p. 206). We must be on our guard, too, against the expression "Father in Heaven," and against many other expressions rhetorically used by Mr. Lang anent gods of the lower races. They convey to our minds reminiscences of Christian teaching of which the savage mind is guiltless. Equally the words "eternal" and "immortal" are the vehicle of thoughts unknown to the lower culture. Vain will be the attempt to read the mind of the savage if we persist in putting a civilised gloss on all his ideas. Mr. Lang tells us that death is not envisaged by the savage as necessary and inevitable even for himself. He uses this fact, admitted by all anthropologists, against "the ghost theory" of the origin of religion (p. 203). But, if good for anything, it is good for more inferences than Mr. Lang cares to draw. A savage, who did not admit that he himself must die, would not think or speak of his gods as immortal; for that would be to assign them a distinctive quality, and to imply that he, on the other hand, was inevitably mortal. If they do not die, it is because their vaster power enables them to ward off dangers, magical or violent, to which all living things are liable. Still less would he conceive of them as eternal. Eternity and immortality express definite

ideas not formulated in the vague and sluggish mind of a savage. He has never thought them out. Mr. Lang finds it necessary to modify Professor Jevons' assertion that "ancestors known to be human were not worshipped as gods, and ancestors worshipped as gods were not believed to have been human" (p. 206). He unconsciously modifies it still further when he admits that Daramulun and Napi (a god of the Blackfeet of North America—here he anticipates), and Baiame are best described as "magnified non-natural men," and quotes Curr concerning the Gippsland tribes that "they believe the Creator was a gigantic black, living among the stars" (pp. 207, 203).[1] A savage indeed holds his god to be altogether such an one as himself: the god reflects his features, mental, moral, and physical, on a larger scale. The god of the savage is not "a deified blackfellow," but the savage himself raised to the *nth* power.

I traverse, therefore, the pleonastic assertion that "where the first ancestor is equivalent to the Creator, and is supreme, he is—from the first—deathless and immortal" (p. 205). According to savage philosophy there must have been a first ancestor "once upon a time." But to apply the term Creator to him is to credit the savage philosopher with the ideas of the civilised philosopher. The savage "creator" is at most

[1] The reference, given only vaguely by Mr. Lang, is to *The Australian Race*, vol. iii., p. 547. The quotation is not accurate; nor does it bear out Mr. Lang's contention in the paragraph where it is quoted, that "The savage Supreme Being, with added power, omniscience, and immortality, is the idealisation of the savage, as conceived of by himself, *minus* fleshly body (as a rule), and *minus* Death." Quoted *verbatim*, it runs: "The Creator of all that has life on earth they believe to have been a gigantic blackfellow, who lived in Gippsland many centuries ago, and dwells amongst the stars. Indeed, many of the stars are named after some of their people long since dead." The death of the "Creator" is surely implied here, as a preliminary to his translation "amongst the stars." Observe, too, the limitation of his "creative" functions. Curr's conclusions are not always to be trusted, and his knowledge of the majority of the tribes was second-hand and imperfect; but his presentation of the god in these words is to be preferred to Mr. Lang's.

a fashioner of pre-existing material, a transformer of pre-existing shapes. Very often he is regarded literally as tribal ancestor. Mr. Lang is generous enough to erect him into an "equal Father of all men;" but where are the proofs? Even supremacy is in general only to be predicated of him in a limited fashon: it does not extend beyond the government of the tribe. He may best be described as a sublimated headman. And of immortality the savage knows nothing either for his ghosts or for his gods. The sacredness of the god's name is merely the fear of summoning him on an inappropriate occasion. Mr. Lang tells us he is "far too sacred to be represented by idols" (p. 198). But the Australian has no idols. His high gods and his low gods are, save during the mysteries of some tribes, equally destitute of *simulacra*. The truth is that he has not arrived at the stage of development in art which expresses itself in idols. It is a question of art rather than religious feeling. For their secret rites the Wiradthuri make temporary figures in the earth, just as the North American Indians do on similar occasions in sand. The figures are not only that of Baiame, but of the emu he was pursuing when, like Humpty Dumpty, he had a bad fall; of the *wahwee*, a fabulous monster resembling a snake, which used to kill and eat Baiame's people; and of one of Baiame's sons, perhaps Daramulun. The sun, the moon and other objects are also represented.[1] Whatever sacredness applies to one of these objects applies to them all. They are made for a special purpose, and the prohibition to make them at other times may probably be rather with the intention of keeping inviolate the secrecy of the rites than from a feeling of awe. Moreover, the "High God" is by no means omniscient, nor can the ascription of "unbounded power" be taken literally. As reasonable would it be to ascribe omnipotence

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xxiv., p. 416; vol. xxv., pp. 300, 301. *Cf.* vol. xiii., pp. 452, 453.

to a Breton saint. Neither the Breton peasant nor the Australian savage thinks of limits to the potency of saint or god. He never thinks about it. But that is not to ascribe omnipotence. Lastly, the stories told of the god, whether in or out of the sacred mysteries, are equally grotesque.

His moral qualities remain to be considered. They seem, according to Mr. Lang, to be witnessed in two ways. "He is not moved by sacrifice." Mr. Lang adds the true reason: "He has not the chance." Then it is no credit to him, for sacrifices are unknown to his worshippers: they offer them to no god. Secondly, "The God discourages sin, he does not set the example of sinning" (p. 198). The context shows what sin Mr. Lang is thinking of, for he says: "In its highest aspect that 'simplest theology' of Australia is free from the faults of popular theology in Greece." The highest aspect of the theology of Greece might perhaps compare not unfavourably with the highest aspect of Australian theology. But let that pass. The popular theology of Greece was a survival of savagery, as the author of *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* has conclusively shown; and the savage theology of Australia affords apt comparison. Take Bunjil. One of the legends concerning this "Supreme Being" runs as follows: He was the first man. He made everything, including Karween, the second man, and two wives for Karween. By a singular want of forethought he made no wife for himself; and whether his powers of making were exhausted, or whether he preferred conduct like that of "the popular Zeus or Ares," we are not told: anyhow he stole Karween's wives, both of them. Though he afterwards restored them, this led to a fight, in which Bunjil got slightly wounded. In his rage he threw a spear at Karween and pierced his thigh, so that he could walk about no more. Bunjil then changed him into a crane, took his wives for good, and became the father of many children.[1]

[1] Brough Smyth, vol. i., p. 426.

Such a story might have been taken out of Ovid. It is mere mythology; but so are the stories of naughty Zeus and Ares, with which, to their disadvantage, Mr. Lang compares Australian theology. A theorist may ignore such tales, and then claim that "the status of theology does not correspond to the status in material and intellectual culture," and that "the popular Zeus or Ares is degenerate from Daramulun." Will the claim bear a moment's inspection?

The reference to Daramulun is particularly unfortunate, for Zeus and Ares are not represented in the popular theology as eaters of human flesh. Zeus, we know, punished Tantalus for setting human flesh before him; he repudiated human sacrifices, and turned Lycaon into a wolf for offering him one. But (not to insist on the emu, at once Daramulun's wife and his food) Daramulun, as we have seen, habitually fed on adolescent youths, and that not in "the popular theology," but in the sacred revelations of the mysteries. In those revelations, too, Baiame's morals are displayed. It was for the loss to himself rather than the deceit practised by Daramulun that he slew him; he expressly commanded a continuance of the deceit towards the women and uninitiated. With such fervour "the God discourages sin, he does not set the example of sinning!"

But what about the precepts inculcated in the mysteries? Mr. Lang quotes the late Professor Huxley as affirming that theology "in its simplest condition, such as may be met with among the Australian savages," "is wholly independent of ethics" (p. 191). If by theology be meant *religion*, and not merely *mythology*, Mr. Lang is right in taking exception to it. For in a low stage of savagery evolution has not yet severed morality from law, nor law from religion. Tribal custom is religious; all social institutions are connected with religion; religion is intimately mixed up with every act of daily life. There is a stage in the evolution of civilisation when religion is little more than the practice of ritual; but it is not the earliest. Nor

even there is it quite separated from social relations. At a lower stage religion is eminently social, and cannot be distinguished from other social precepts and practices. It is not so much that there is a religious sanction for certain rules of conduct, as that religion is one aspect, and a necessary aspect, of every part of social life.

We expect, therefore, to find the tribal ethics and principles of government inculcated in ceremonies like those of the admission of the young tribesmen to the privileges and responsibilities of manhood. Henceforward the youths are to take their place in the social system as something more than mere appendages. The power of the tribe to hold its own in the struggle for life, and hence its continued existence as a tribe, will be dependent on their rigorous adherence to the customs handed down from their forefathers, customs that have made the tribe what it is, and without which its social life must have been long ago dissolved or transformed. Among the Kurnai the chief precepts laid upon the neophytes are given by Mr. Howitt under five heads.[1] Mr. Lang, in enumerating them, punctuates them with references to the Bible—a subtle rhetorical device intended to lead up to a theological conclusion, but not quite in place in a scientific work.

Let us look at these five precepts, premising that, so far as we have information, they are similar in general terms to those inculcated throughout the eastern part of the continent.

The first is: "To listen to and obey the old men." "Fifth Commandment," says Mr. Lang in parenthesis. With all respect to him, it has no more to do with the Fifth Commandment than with the Vaccination Act. "Honour thy father and thy mother," says the Fifth Commandment. The Kurnai commandment refers not to parents as such,

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiv., p. 316. The passage is quoted, but not fully, by Mr. Lang, who gives no reference to it. The reference (p. 197) to pp. 423, 424, is impossible, for the volume so cited contains only 404 pages.

for the authority of parents over their sons comes to an end with the initiation ceremonies. The Kurnai commandment refers to the general body of the elders. The Australian tribes are loosely compacted organisms, where the government resides in no single individual. There is usually a headman of undefined powers, who among the Kurnai may be, and perhaps oftener than not is, a wizard; among the Murring he must be so.[1] Force of character and the superstitions connected with a sorcerer's craft are probably the chief factors in determining the extent of the headman's powers. In any case, the general body of the elderly men, whether wizards or fighters, must have great weight in all concerns of the tribe. Among the Kurnai, the women share to some extent in the respect and authority due to the men; and, alike for the women and the men, respect increases with age. The possession of exceptional qualities, mental or physical, is also, at least in the case of men, and, if I read the account correctly, of women too, regarded as a claim to authority. But, while he would be a bold man who would venture to set at naught the opinions of the elders, they appear to possess no direct sanction. One chief reason, therefore, for the existence of the mysteries of initiation is to confirm and prolong the power of the old men, and to substitute for the yoke of the father that of the general body of the elders. Mr. Howitt is emphatic on the point, and a consideration of the details of the ceremonies and the precepts attests the accuracy of his opinion.[2] So obviously is this the case, that it has been acutely conjectured that the mysteries are a relic of a primitive contest, similar to that which takes place in herds of gregarious mammalia when the young males arrive at maturity. In this view the older men, for the preservation of their position and rights, especially their rights over the females

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., pp. 42, 43.

[2] Fison and Howitt, p. 210. *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiii., p. 457; vol. xiv., p. 320.

of the tribe, would have been accustomed to attack and slay, or drive away the younger men, when masculine instincts began to show themselves in these, or to reduce them to a state of submission; and in the course of evolution the milder alternative has prevailed.[1] Without pronouncing an opinion on the point, it is sufficient to adduce it here as showing that the precept we are considering has so little to do with the Decalogue that, to a scientific man who approaches the Australian mysteries having no theological preoccupation, they suggest something on a totally different plane from the Fifth Commandment.

The next precept is: "To share everything they have with their friends." "Do to others as you would have others do to you," observes Mr. Lang under his breath; and elsewhere he refers to "the central moral doctrine of Christianity," and "the lesson of Our Lord" (pp. 196, 195, 235). The interpretation is, however, not so easy and off-hand. The precept as given by Mr. Howitt is not—none of them is—an exact report, but a very summary statement. And in reporting it he has chosen words unfortunately ambiguous. To attain a fairly correct notion of its real meaning, we must know something of the customs of the Australian race in general, and in particular of the Kurnai. Among a race low as this in scale of civilisation very little property was owned. There is some discrepancy in the evidence as to individual ownership of land; but on the whole there can be little doubt that Mr. Brough Smyth is right in summing up against it.[2] It is possible that the cases of individual ownership referred to by Grey and Eyre were invasions of tribal or clan rights; and if so, one object of the instructions summarised in Mr. Howitt's second precept may have been to discountenance, in the general interest, any aggressions of the kind. It is more likely

[1] Ludwig Krzyurcki, in *Report of International Folklore Congress, Chicago, July*, 1893, p. 204.

[2] Brough Smyth, vol. i., p. 146.

that these early explorers misunderstood the facts, or were misled. Natives of many tribes appear to claim individual rights to collect the grubs in certain grass-trees. But the claimant would have discovered the grubs in a broken tree, or he would himself have topped the tree to induce the decay in which the grubs are found. Nor has he, so far as we can gather, any actual property in the tree. The same observation applies to the discovery of wild honey in a tree. The tree is marked by the discoverer; and he is entitled to get the honey, to the exclusion of others. Here of course we have the rude beginnings of individual ownership, but nothing more.

The chief permanent property of an Australian native is in the rug which covers him, and the tools and weapons by which he maintains himself. These he does not share with his friends. As little evidence is there that he shares the shells, the hair, the feathers, wherewith he is wont to adorn himself. The precept alludes most probably to the proceeds of the chase and other kinds of food. With regard to these, there are precise and detailed rules that specify the manner of distribution and the persons among whom the food is to be divided. The rules differ among different tribes. Those of the Kurnai, and the tribes of Maneroo, in New South Wales, have been given at length by Mr. Howitt, who says that in every case "the cooked food was divided by the procurer into certain portions, which were allotted by custom to various members of his family group."[1]

I cannot find at the reference given by Mr. Lang (p. 195) the quotation he makes from Mr. Howitt, to the effect that "the old men deemed that through intercourse with whites 'the lads had become selfish, and no longer inclined to share that which they had obtained by their own exertions, or had given them, with their friends.'" No doubt I have overlooked it. But I see no reason to suppose that it

[1] Fison and Howitt, p. 207. For details see *ibid.*, p. 261.

means more than the breach of tribal regulations as to the division of food. It is easily conceivable that young savages, not fully tutored in the ways of their ancestors, would be greatly influenced by the intensely individualistic life of the colonists with whom they had been brought into contact. An entirely new order of ideas would have been opened to them. The result would be a loosening of the old bonds, and the adoption of all such practices of the white men as might be agreeable, or might flatter their self-importance.[1] Among these, the keeping to themselves of all the food they had earned or received as gifts would be of the first importance in the eyes of the elders; for upon the food supply the continued existence of the tribe would depend. It lies, therefore, upon Mr. Lang to show that the precept means anything beyond a prohibition of violating the tribal regulations concerning the distribution of food. That it will bear a serious comparison in its intention with "the central moral doctrine of Christianity" is assumed in an airy way, but at present I wait for the evidence.

The third precept, "to live peaceably with their friends," calls forth no remark from Mr. Lang. Nor is it necessary here to do more than point out its bearing on the general government of the tribe. As in the last precept, the word *friends* is ambiguous. Surrounded by actual and potential enemies, internal quarrels are likely to lead to a weakening of the community, and consequent inability to make head against its foes. Quarrels between clans, or between associated tribes, lead to results even more serious, at all events in their immediate consequences, in the blood-feud with its attendant calamities. An act of individual aggression or treachery gives occasion for reprisals which may mean a state of war for years. And all

[1] The old men certainly did say that the youths "were now growing wild. They had been too much with the whites, so that now they paid no attention to the words of the old men, or to those of the missionaries." *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiv., p. 304. The influence of the old men was distinctly at stake.

quarrels are intensified by the belief in sorcery, and the dread of its exercise without any known provocation. It is, therefore, anything but superfluous to impress on the novice the importance of politeness, and of repressing his self-assertive and quarrelsome instincts. As Mr. Palmer reports the instruction among the tribes about the Cloncurry and the Flinders in northern Australia, "he is to be silent and not given to quarrelling. . . . . He is led to consider himself responsible for good conduct to the tribe, its ancient traditions, and its elders."[1] Observe, not to the "Supreme Being." The ethics inculcated are the rudiments of social order.

On the fourth precept, "Not to interfere with girls or married women," Mr. Lang ejaculates "Seventh Commandment." Really one would suppose he had never heard of the sexual arrangements of the Australian aborigines. So complex a subject cannot be fully explained in a few lines; happily there are few anthropological students who are unacquainted with it. It is enough for our purpose to say that in earlier times the domestic condition was that of marriage, if marriage it may be called, of both man and woman to a group. From this it was everywhere passing, or had passed, before the advent of Europeans, to the individual appropriation by the stronger and older men of as many wives as they could severally manage. But even the most powerful man was not unrestricted in his choice of wives. They must be selected among women not belonging to his own clan, or to his birth-division, often called "class." This was a restriction he could not infringe without incurring the penalty of death, or becoming an outcast: a restriction, moreover, regarded with feelings akin to those with which we regard incest. The restriction had the twofold effect of limiting the possibilities of quarrelling over the women, and of preventing to some extent inbreeding. Yet it is quite

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiii., p. 296.

common for the older men, while observing the restriction, practically to engross among them all the women of the tribe. This obtains "especially where group-marriage is still in the ascendant," or, more accurately, where it has not yet been effaced by individual marriage. "But this monopoly is not exclusive; at certain times and on certain occasions the old communal right revives in favour of the younger men, or of friendly strangers visiting the tribe." Mr. Howitt, whom I am quoting, adds significantly: "It may be even more correct to say that the old communal rights have never ceased to exist, but that the older men claim the right of withholding them from the younger ones, and granting them at intervals." [1] The observation throws a flood of light upon the meaning of the precept against interfering with girls and women. Like the rest of the exhortations, it is intended to uphold and increase the authority of the elders, and to conserve the institutions of the tribe. Beyond that, its object is to maintain the grip of the elders upon the women.

Owing probably to their isolation the Kurnai differed somewhat in their marital institutions from other tribes. They had evolved them further in the direction of monogamy. For the number of wives a man might have, though in theory unlimited, was in practice usually confined to one, except where, as often happened, his wife's sister had been given to him by their father, or where, by the operation of the Levirate, his brother's widow fell to him. Corresponding with this limitation, the husband expected strict fidelity on the part of his wives, the Kurnai being much more jealous than most natives. The precept in some form seems universal. Its exact form among the Kurnai is left by Mr. Howitt to be guessed at. Among the northern tribes of whom Mr. Palmer writes, it is evident that wife-stealing,

[1] Fison and Howitt, p. 354. The entire chapter should be read; also the chapter on Marriage in Brough Smyth's *Aborigines of Victoria*.

though an offence, is a comparatively venial one. In their ceremonies the youth "is told to conduct himself discreetly towards women, to restrict himself to the class which his name confines him to, and not to look after another's *gin*; that if he does take another *gin* when young who belongs to another, he is to give her up without any fighting; not to take advantage of a *gin* if he finds her alone."[1]

While referring to the form in which the precept is communicated, I may mention that the tribes of southern New South Wales (the Murring, Wiraijuri, Kamilaroi, and others) present their moral lessons during the initiation ceremonies "in pantomimic dances," the old men threatening the youths: "If you do anything like that when you go back you will be killed"—that is, says Mr. Howitt, "either by magic or by violence:" apparently not by divine interference. The pantomimic dances corresponding to the precept we are considering are grossly obscene,[2] though, as Mr. Lang reminds us (p. 194), "divinely sanctioned." We have already taken the moral measure of Daramulun, the game-legged, and by no means eternal, "Creator and Judge," in whose name they are performed.

Even where, as among the Kurnai, the elders are comparatively unselfish in the matter of wives, the difficulties and suspicions attaching to an unmarried man are such as to render life a burden to himself and to the elders, who, even if they have not wives or daughters of their own to watch, are always anxious lest he provoke a quarrel within the camp, or a war with a neighbouring tribe. If he have a kinswoman—a sister, say, or a daughter—to exchange for a bride, the affair is often susceptible of arrangement. If not, his only alternative, as a rule, is an elopement. A necessary preliminary to elopement is the capture and forcible violation of the bride on the part of four confederate

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiii., p. 296. *Cf.* W. E. Roth, *Ethnological Studies among the North-West Central Queensland Aborigines*, p. 181.

[2] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiii., p. 450. *Cf.* vol. xxiv., p. 424.

brogans: doubtless a relic of group-marriage. The elopement renders the bride's family furious. A hue and cry follows; and, if caught, the bridegroom has to fight the bride's male relatives, while she, on the other hand, is speared or beaten. A second or third elopement must be accomplished before the couple are forgiven. Elopement with a woman already appropriated entails, of course, much more serious consequences.[1]

It is difficult to seize the exact meaning of the precept reported thus concisely. Addressed to the youthful Kurnai, and reinforced by another precept I shall mention presently, it may amount to a total (though perhaps temporary) prohibition of all female intercourse. This is not within the scope of the Seventh Commandment. Or it may be merely a prohibition of violence. If so, with the crude and cruel Australian fashions of courting, it is hardly going too far to assert that in a large number of cases a young man cannot appropriate any woman, even in a legitimate manner, without breach of it. Naturally, the elders desire to postpone such appropriation as long as possible, both because it infringes their monopoly, and because of the quarrels, not to say feuds, it risks. Failing either of these explanations, we must fill in the details in some such way as Mr. Palmer has done. On the whole, it is clear that the precept in question is directed to produce neither the moral quality of chastity, nor chivalry towards women; it is firstly and chiefly an engine of government. Its ethics are not one inch in advance of the general state of savagery of the Kurnai.

The last of the five precepts is: "To obey the food-restrictions *until they are released from them by the old men.*" Mr. Lang curtails it of the qualifying clause, and appends the words "Leviticus, *passim.*" The forbidden food is the

[1] Fison and Howitt, p. 200, *seqq*. In other tribes the capture, &c., of the bride by four confederates is the ordinary wedding ceremony. *See*, for example, *Report of the Horn Expedition*, pt. iv., p. 165.

emu, the porcupine, and the female of any animal. The prohibition is only temporary, intended, so far as we can judge, to test the obedience and the awe of the neophyte. By degrees he is made free of the flesh of all the animals. "This freedom is given him by one of the old men suddenly and unexpectedly smearing some of the cooked fat over his face." One who can see Leviticus in this horseplay may be congratulated on his powers of vision. Mr. Howitt does not pretend to do so. What he does see is that the novice is schooled in self-restraint and self-reliance, by being placed in temporary artificial want while surrounded with plenty, and that his superstitions are the means of compelling him to learn the required lesson.[1]

In his account of the ceremonies practised by the Murring and allied tribes in southern New South Wales, Mr. Howitt goes more into detail in reference to the limitations of food, and supplies the reasons. The prohibited animals are: "(1) Any animal that burrows in the ground, for it recalls to mind the foot-holes where the tooth was knocked out; *e.g.*, the wombat. (2) Such creatures as have very prominent teeth, for these recall the tooth itself. (3) Any animal that climbs to the tree-tops, for they are then near to Daramulun; *e.g.*, the native bear. (4) Any bird that swims, for it recalls the final washing. (5) Nor, above all, the emu, for this is Ngalalbal, the wife of Daramulun, and at the same time "the woman," for the novice during his probation is not permitted even so much as to look at a woman or to speak to one; and even for some time after he must cover his mouth with a rug when one is present." These prohibitions are relaxed in the same way as among the Kurnai.[2] The Kamilaroi forbid "the codfish, the porcupine, the yellow iguana, the black iguana, &c.," all of which Mr. Matthews

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiv., pp. 316, 321.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 455. It will be remembered that, among the Wiraijuri, the emu is "the food of Baiame," and it is for that reason forbidden to the novices.

suggests are totems. Here again the taboo is only temporary, though it is not taken off until the youths have attended a second *Bora*, or sacred initiation ceremony.[1]

The real origin and meaning of the food prohibitions in Leviticus are still a puzzle to scholars. Perhaps Mr. Lang has an explanation up his sleeve that will apply equally to the Hebrew permanent prohibitions, resting ostensibly on the distinction between clean and unclean animals, and these Australian temporary prohibitions, intended for a probationary purpose, and resting ostensibly on ceremonial or mythic reasons. Otherwise, in the name of science what meaning have the words "Leviticus, *passim*"?

There were further rules, not recounted by Mr. Lang, imposed by the same divine authority of Mungan-ngaur. They are not, indeed, quite so redolent of the Decalogue or Leviticus, *passim*, even to a sensitive nostril, as some of the foregoing. But they are of quite as much value to inquirers who really desire to know the meaning of the initiation ceremonies, and to estimate aright the relation of the ceremonies and the ideas expressed thereby to the civilisation, or rather to the savagery, of the Kurnai. Two are set forth by Mr. Howitt. The novice was "not to use the right hand for anything, unless told to do so by the Bullawang," an adult kinsman in charge of him during the rites. The penalty threatened for breach of this rule was that some magical substance would enter the offending member, and would require the doctor to extract it. It is hard with our present knowledge to understand this taboo. It may have had some object beyond that of further impressing the youths with unreasoning terror and submission; that object it certainly had. The other prohibition has parallels among most savage nations: "They were cautioned not to go near an *enceinte* woman, nor to let a woman's shadow fall across them, nor to permit a woman to make bread for them, under

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xxiv., p. 426.

the certainty that such acts would cause them to become 'thin, lazy, and stupid.'" The separation of women, and the horror of them, especially at certain times, need not be discussed. It is universal in the lower culture, nor has it wholly disappeared among the more ignorant classes of civilised nations. A close inspection might even detect it in "Leviticus, *passim*." Mr. Howitt's observations here must also be read in connection with the fourth precept. "I doubt," he says, "if there is any rule of conduct under which the novice is placed, which is not directly intended to some end beneficial to the community, or believed to be so. The rule as to keeping far from even the shadow of a woman is clearly intended to prevent, by supernatural terrors, any interference with woman, which, as 'Love laughs at locksmiths,' the old men knew well not even the dread of the spear or waddy would suffice to prevent." And he affixes this shrewd note: "An additional motive for these rules is evidently the advantage which the old men reap from them." [1]

As little, therefore, as the Australian theology do the precepts taught in the Australian mysteries, when carefully examined, yield evidence of anything higher than the state of savagery in which the natives are found. If it be doubtful how far in every case the god undertakes the superintendence of the neophyte's conduct, there is at least no doubt that what Mr. Lang calls "ethical conformity to his will" is simply conformity to existing savage institutions, and has no observable tendency to elevate the individual beyond them. The facts alleged to prove "that much of the Decalogue and a large element of Christian ethics are divinely sanctioned in savage religion" (p. 327), turn out, so far as the Blackfellows are concerned, to be misinterpreted. Neglecting the true canon of inquiry, Mr. Lang has attempted to explain the moral code of the Kurnai, not

[1] *Journ. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. xiv., p. 321. Compare the prohibitions among the Murring and allied tribes, quoted a little above.

by reference to the tribal customs and environment, but by a far loftier religion and an alien civilisation. The result is to add one more to the long list of warnings that Science is a jealous mistress, who must be wooed for her own sake, and not because she is presumed to be the latest favourite of a rich old aunt, Theology.

Something might well be added on Mr. Lang's presentation of the ceremonies themselves. But I have already occupied too much space; and what has been said is enough —perhaps more than enough—to tire the most patient reader. We have as yet information about the religious faith and ceremonies of very few of the Australian natives. The unity of the race and its isolation through unknown periods of time afford ground for the hope that when, if ever, we are able to study it as a whole, the process of comparison will yield results of special value to the anthropologist, results not the least of which will be gotten in the region of its religious belief. But our efforts to this end will be foredoomed to failure, unless we anxiously put aside all Christian and highly civilised conceptions, and endeavour, first of all, to view the religion and ethics of the Blackfellows as part of, and in connection with, their general condition, mental, social, and material. When we have exhausted every available fact, and failed to correlate the faith and moral code of the race with the rest of its culture, then and only then shall we be justified in admitting the incongruity which Mr. Lang asserts between them. Even so much as we now know, however, affords a strong presumption that the more we learn about them, the more intimate and indissoluble will be seen to be the bond between these two sets of phenomena. No wonder the author distrusts his own theory. I am greatly mistaken if the evidence I have imperfectly brought together here do not lead us to share his distrust, and beckon us to something more than a superficial examination of his account of the beliefs of other savages.

THE SHREW ASH IN RICHMOND PARK.

BY MARGARET C. FFENNELL.

[The photographs, of which the following paper is an explanation, were (with some others referred to in the footnote) presented to the Society by Miss Ffennell, and exhibited on her behalf at the meeting of February 20th, 1895. As it seemed desirable to preserve a record of the facts relating to the Richmond ash, so far as they are known, she has added to the Society's debt to her by acceding to the Editor's request to set them down here.]

In offering the following note to accompany the three illustrations of this interesting relic of folk-belief, I would like to start by saying that the Shrew Ash in Richmond Park is not a "mere sucker" springing from the old roots, but a living fragment of the ancient tree itself. The "Sheen Tree," as it is sometimes called, does not only mark the spot where once the famous ash grew, but preserves to this day a still growing portion of the actual part of the trunk where the ritual was performed while the ash remained entire.[1] I wish to emphasise this, as it has been denied once at a meeting of our Society and frequently elsewhere. The identity of the present fragment will, I think, be clearly demonstrated to anyone who compares the old illustrations of 1856 and the sketch of 1860, referred to in the note at foot of the page, either with the tree itself, the most satisfactory mode of comparison, or with the illustrations of 1891. A glance at the latter will show how unmistakably the form of the lower branches in their modern condition agrees with

[1] See Plate IV., on left-hand side, the "witch-bar" as it appeared in 1856, and Plates V. and VI. (taken 1891), on left-hand side, showing where one end of the bar was attached to the tree now standing; the place of attachment is indicated by the rounded projection something less than half-way up the old trunk. The complete series of illustrations, including one giving a full view of the tree, with top branches and "witch-bar," taken from a sketch of an engraving made in 1859 or 1860, and four other views of the tree in 1891, may be seen in the Society's Museum collection of various photographs connected with folklore subjects.

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